

Twentieth Century American Drama
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Lecture - 31
Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* Part 2

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GEORGE (Fake-spits) ... to you. ...

(Door chime again)

MARTHA

(Shouting ... to the door) COME IN! (To GEORGE, between her teeth) I said, get over there!

GEORGE (Moves a little toward the door, smiling slightly) All right, love... whatever love wants. (Stops) Just don't start on the bit, that's all.

MARTHA

The bit? The bit? What kind of language is that? What are you talking about?

GEORGE The bit. Just don't start in on the bit.

MARTHA

You imitating one of your students, for God's sake? What are you trying to do? what bit?



This is an NPTEL lecture on Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*. We were reading the play and we have we are at a point where Nick and Honey are about to make their entrance and things are about to go really bad. As mentioned improv and we will see the importance of improv in this play.

Just before he is about to open the door George says just do not start on the bit that is all. "Martha says the bit? The bit? What kind of language is that? What are you talking about?" We see that this is something Martha does not yet know; what he is talking about that bit, what kind of language is that and we will see constant references to language will come up that and this act is called "Fun and Games". We have some philosopher called Ludwig Wittgenstein who talked about language games.

By language games he meant that we are all playing different language games, that when we say something we have our own discourse our own meanings inside our head that can never be totally conveyed through language to the other person. The other person in their own context, make another meaning of that word that we have said. We see this is how

sarcasm irony this take place. Sarcastic comments would be like something that of a language game that one is saying something sarcastically someone. But we do not quite actually be very blunt, so that person takes it up as an affront.

So, that is how language games operate, it is about not being able to communicate fully what one means and this is also in line what Derrida also points out about language and which he terms as difference. So, it is this constant process of difference and deferral it is a special category difference and deferral a temporal category postponement.

We can never arrive at a true meaning it is always something different and always something belated. It is difficult to be at the same place at the same time to actually communicate to the other person what you want to say. In a sense that is where the positive the lack in language to a certain extent comes in.

George says the bit just do not start in on the bit. The name of the act is “Fun and Games”. Again like what we will see is that this plays tell us that games and fun is not always very innocent; games are not innocent, the rules of a game are not always innocent.

If one is learning a foreign language, and speaking that language can also be like a game with it is own rules. But one would say that the rules of that language are so different from the language you speak that is what makes it difficult to pick up that language. And that is what can make let us say a foreign language very tyrannical.

Let us say one goes to a foreign land where people do not speak a common language one feels a tyrannical presence of that language in one’s life that how will one speak this, then you are caught in those rules in those laws. Games and laws and rules are not often very innocent especially in this play and we have this saying it is all fun and games till someone loses an eye.

This is what it feels like this is ominous quality about fun ominous quality about games that someone might lose an eye or something more precious in the play.

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GEORGE Just don't start in on the bit about the kid, that's all.
MARTHA
What do you take me for?
GEORGE
Much too much.
MARTHA (Really angered) Yeah? Well, I'll start in on the kid if I want to.
GEORGE Just leave the kid out of this.
MARTHA (Threatening) He's mine as much as he is yours. Til talk about him if I want to.
GEORGE
I'd advise against it, Martha.
MARTHA
Well, good for you. (Knock) C'mon in. Get over there and open the door!
GEORGE You've been advised.



George again says the bit, just do not start in on the bit and Martha still not getting what is it about. Then says “George says just do not start in on the bit about the kid that is all”. We can see that this is something George plants in Martha’s head in a sense like, this is a game we are going to play. He does not even lay out the rules to Martha like these are this is what we will do when the guests come this is how we will play.

This is like a free play this is like games without rules and as we will see the problem of games without rules is that they become chaotic very soon, when you have game bound by rules you do not have you have an umpire or you have a referee who comes and sits and kind of coordinates the rules of the game.

But this is a game without rules even the players do not know what the rules are, even the players do not know what they will get. It will probably get bloody and you will see like they will probably blows below the belt which would be illegal in many sports, but there will be.

So, there are no rules and it is improv; from now on it is improv it is improvisation, the couple Martha and George they will just improvise in front of the guests. And what that gives this play also a fluid character which kind of in a very postmodern way takes it away from the grasp of the author. That is within the hand of the characters it is their lives it is what they choose to, but they might randomly spring on the other people.

And if you see the audience here they also cannot play the role of a referee, they also cannot play the role of a person who controls the game. They are also just the witness to what kind of open play open game this play will soon become. And but Martha takes it up really fast.

So, you see they are a seasoned couple that is the thing like, if you mistake they are fighting for something that they do not know each other which we will see later act on the later acts also they are a seasoned couple. They have moments of tenderness. Martha says that it is only George who has ever made her happy and nobody else, but we still see there is kind of bitterness happening between them.

So, you can see that they are used to they are more like a seasoned couple against the new couple that are going to come in and the seasoned couple has much more aces up their sleeve, they have more games up their sleeves that they can play with the people and you can see that there Martha is just like that picking up.

And but we will see later between Nick and Honey certain miscommunication certain impossibility of communication that takes place. So, I wanted to keep in mind this idea of the improv that they are improvising. And that kind of creates a sense of what is real and what is not real, what is being made up what is not being made up, what has source in life or does not have source in life this kind of problems.

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Well, good for you. (Knock) C'mon in. Get over there and open the door!

GEORGE You've been advised

MARTHA

Yeah . . . sure. Get over there!

GEORGE (Moving toward the door) All right, love . . . whatever love wants. Isn't it nice the way some people have manners, though, even in this day and age? Isn't it nice that some people won't just come breaking into other people's houses even if they do hear some subhuman monster yowling at 'em from inside . . . ?

MARTHA SCREW YOU!

(Simultaneously with MARTHA'S last remark, GEORGE flings open the front door. HONEY and NICK are framed in the entrance. There is a brief silence, then. . . .)

GEORGE (Ostensibly a pleased recognition of HONEY and NICK, but really satisfaction at having MARTHA'S explosion overheard) Ahhhhhhhhh!

MARTHA (A little too loud . . . to cover) Hi! Hi, there . . . c'mon in!

HONEY and NICK (ad lib) Hello, here we are . . . hi . . . etc.

GEORGE (Very matter-of-factly) You must be our little guests.



And Martha says really angered; yeah? Well, I will start in on the kid if I want to. So, really angered if this is a play they know it is a play that it is a play that George is introducing, but the emotions are nonetheless real. So, that is another thing that Albee does very intelligently that, if you think this is all games, this is all play, this is all like role acting play acting then suddenly you see the emotions on the stage are very real.

That people are pleading people that do not go there, do not go there are emotional outbursts George suddenly breaks a bottle of alcohol, someone is really angered that is why the stage directions come in really angered. So, you see that he puts in these real emotions to show that even the characters probably at this point do not know the difference between reality and truth. If it is being talked about a child then Martha is like saying that he is mine as much as he is yours.

So, there is no ownership of characters, it is always separate it is always spread out there is no authority that can be ultimately claimed. And she says till I will talk about him if I want to and George says I would advise against it Martha. So, it is a veiled threat it is a veiled he does not say like do not do it like that he said I would advise against it to coax her on, you see that the game is brewing that the sense of the game the sense of the play is slowly coming up brewing.

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(Simultaneously with MARTHA'S last remark, GEORGE flings open the front door. HONEY and NICK are framed in the entrance. There is a brief silence, then. . .)

GEORGE (Ostensibly a pleased recognition of HONEY and NICK, but really satisfaction at having MARTHA'S explosion overheard) Ahhhhhhhhh!

MARTHA (A little too loud . . . to cover) Hi! Hi, there . . . c'mon in!

HONEY and NICK (ad lib) Hello, here we are . . . hi . . . etc.

GEORGE (Very matter-of-factly) You must be our little guests.

MARTHA

Ha, ha, ha, ha! Just ignore old sour-puss over there. C'mon in, kids . . . give your coats and stuff to sour-puss.

NICK (Without expression) Well, now, perhaps we shouldn't have come. . .

HONEY

Yes . . . it w late, and. . .

MARTHA Late! Are you kidding? Throw your stuff down anywhere and c'mon in.

GEORGE (Vaguely . . . walking away) Anywhere . . . furniture, floor . . . doesn't make any difference around



And just when George opens the door to Nick and Honey; Martha screams screw you. And when he opens the door Honey and Nick are framed in the entrance there is a brief

silence, because they get to hear that from within the room and that is the sense of welcome.

So, again like in hospitality when you open the door to someone if it is an unknown person you would ask ok, what is your name, where do you come from and if it is someone known you would say like we are so happy to have you, how was your journey and everything. But here we see that the guests are rudely being treated to something like screw you and we will see the hospitality they receive would be of a similar kind, it is not a very comfortable hospitality.

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NPTEL

this place.

NICK (To Honey) I told you we shouldn't have come.

MARTHA (Stentorian) I said c'mon in! Now c'mon!

HONEY (Giggling a little as she and NICK advance) Oh, dear.

GEORGE (Imitating HONEY'S giggle) Hee, hee, hee, hee.

MARTHA (Swinging on GEORGE) Look, muckmouth . . . you cut that out!

GEORGE (Innocence and hurt) Martha! (To HONEY and NICK) Martha's a devil with language; she really is.

MARTHA


Hey, kids ... sit down.

HONEY (As she sits) Oh, isn't this lovely!

NICK (Perfunctorily) Yes indeed . . . very handsome.

MARTHA

Well thank



And you can see that Nick just after he comes in says to Honey, I told you we should not have come. So, there is this sense of regret that is over this play, but nonetheless it you have to move on, you have to continue.

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GEORGE

What it is, actually, is it's a pictorial representation of the order of Martha's mind.

MARTHA

Ha, ha, ha, ha! Make the kids a drink, George. What do you want, kids? What do you want to drink, hunh?

NICK Honey? What would you like?

HONEY I don't know, dear ... A little brandy, maybe. "Never mix--never worry." (She giggles)

GEORGE Brandy? Just brandy? Simple; simple. (Moves to the portable bar) What about you ... uh ...

NICK Bourbon on the rocks, if you don't mind.

GEORGE (As he makes drinks) Mind? No, I don't mind. I don't think I mind. Martha? Rubbing alcohol for you?

MARTHA

Sure. "Never mix--never worry."

GEORGE Martha's tastes in liquor have come down ... simplified over the years ... crystallized. Back when I was courting Martha--well, I don't know if that's exactly the right word for it--but back when I was courting Martha ...



So, again like Martha says “ha ha! make the kids a drink; and we will see that references to drinking continue through the play.” So, they are just guzzling alcohol and you would have to think that they are getting drunk and drunk and more drunk when they are on stage, which kind of makes them more loquacious makes them speak a lot more and you see that the reference to kids.

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MARTHA

Sure. "Never mix--never worry."

GEORGE Martha's tastes in liquor have come down ... simplified over the years ... crystallized. Back when I was courting Martha--well, I don't know if that's exactly the right word for it--but back when I was courting Martha ...

MARTHA (Cheerfully) Screw, sweetie!

GEORGE (Returning with HONEY and NICKS drinks) At any rate, back when I was courting Martha, she'd order the damndest things! You wouldn't believe it! We'd go into a bar ... you know, a bar ... a whiskey, beer, and bourbon bar ... and what she'd do would be, she'd screw up her face, think real hard, and come up with ... brandy Alexanders, creme de cacao frappes, gimlets, flaming punch bowls ... seven-layer liqueur things.

MARTHA They were good ... I liked them.

GEORGE Real lady-like little drinkies.

MARTHA Hey, where's my rubbing alcohol?

GEORGE (Returning to the portable bar) But the years have brought to Martha a sense of essentials ... the knowledge that cream is for coffee, lime juice for pies ... and alcohol (Brings MARTHA her drink) pure and simple ... here you are, angel ... for the pure and simple. (Raises his glass) For the mind's blind eye, the heart's ease, and the liver's craw. Down the hatch, all.



And Honey says that she would have brandy and she says “never mix- never worry”. And you see that Honey and brandy are also things that are taken together often times,

but she says “never mix- never worry”. If one has a sense of ominousness in the play it is, because the characters in the play are mixing if they did not mix it will probably not be of worry.

We would see that it is not only the drinks that are in the question of getting mixed, but characters; characters are mixing in a toxic way. So, if one mixes alcohol, one would have to worry it get might get toxic, but there are this kind of toxic people that are coming together and mixing which is creating another sense of toxicity in the play. And Nick ordered some bourbon on the rocks if you do not mind and they said never mix never worry.

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MARTHA They were good ... I liked them.
GEORGE Real lady-like little drinkies.
MARTHA Hey, where's my rubbing alcohol?
GEORGE (Returning to the portable bar) But the years have brought to Martha a sense of essentials ... the knowledge that cream is for coffee, lime juice for pies ... and alcohol (Brings MARTHA her drink) pure and simple ... here you are, angel ... for the pure and simple. (Raises his glass) For the mind's blind eye, the heart's ease, and the liver's craw. Down the hatch, all.
MARTHA (To them all) Cheers, dears. (They all drink) You have a poetic nature, George ... a Dylan Thomas-y quality that gets me right where I live.
GEORGE
Vulgar girl! With guests here!
MARTHA
Ha, ha ha, ha! (To HONEY and NICK) Hey; hey!



But we will see in the play there is this lot of mixing that will now continue mix; mix up, mixing, mixing up stories not being able to tell mixing up reality and fiction, reality and fiction, mixing up reality and illusion. So, never mix and never worry, but the category of the play that play seems to categorically be saying that, ok mixing is an essential part of life, you cannot get away from life without this sort of mixing.

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MARTHA You lay off my father!

GEORGE
Yes, love. (To Nick) All I mean is . . . when you've had as many of these faculty parties as I have. . .

NICK
(Killing the attempted rapport) I rather appreciated it. I mean, aside from enjoying it, I appreciated it. You know, when you're new at a place. . .

(GEORGE eyes him suspiciously) Meeting everyone, getting introduced around . . . getting to know some of the men. . . When I was teaching in Kansas. . .

HONEY



And so you see here this is a part and you will see certain critics have pointed out that there are certain moments when George tries to kind of connect to Nick, but Nick blocks George from certain connections. So, first George starts with like trying to get into a sort of camaraderie with Nick by saying that when you have had as many of these faculty parties I have then Nick suddenly says it says- killing the attempted rapport I rather appreciated it. I mean aside from enjoying it. I appreciated it. When you are new at a place.

Again this idea of being new at a place being as a foreigner arriving at a place looking for hospitality. And these are like these parties are like ways of extending hospitality to a person which George and George especially says he is like tired of and so we see that tiredness kind of comes into his ability to extend hospitality also.

And George eyes him suspiciously, so, this is one rebuttal from Nick in Nicks attempts to George's attempts to connect with him, we see that there is will always be this disconnect with George and Nick and they will have fights on different matters.

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You won't believe it, but we had to make our way all by ourselves... isn't that right, dear?

NICK Yes, it is... We...

HONEY... We had to make our own way... I had to go up to wives... in the library, or at the supermarket... and say, "Hello, I'm new here... you must be Mrs. So-and-so, Doctor So-and-so's wife." It really wasn't very nice at all.

MARTHA

Well, Daddy knows how to run things.

NICK (Not enough enthusiasm) He's a remarkable man.

MARTHA

You bet your sweet life.

GEORGE (To NICK... a confidence, but not whispered) Let me tell you a secret, baby. There are easier things in the world, if you happen to be teaching at a university, there are easier things than being married to the daughter of the president of that university. There are easier things in this world.

MARTHA (Loud... to no one in particular) It should be an extraordinary opportunity... for some men it would be the chance of a lifetime!

GEORGE (To NICK... a solemn wink) There are, believe me, easier things in this world!



And Honey says that when they would have to live at other places they had to make way all by ourselves there is a sense of loneliness that is highlighted everywhere. And yeah, and you see you must be Mrs. so and so Doctor so-and-so's wife. It really was not very nice at all.

Again like if you remember what I pointed out during the introduction of the characters that the women were; the men were introduced as the husband of a woman not the other way around. But we see that the social norm that I will be subverting there being mentioned here Honey says that it is always Mrs. so and so Doctor so-and-so's wife, the woman takes a back character takes a secondary character which quite does not happen in the play.

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would be the chance of a lifetime!

GEORGE (To NICK . . . a solemn wink) There are, believe me, easier things in this world.

NICK Well, I can understand how it might make for some . . . awkwardness, perhaps . . . conceivably, but . . .

MARTHA Some men would give their right arm for the chance!

GEORGE (Quietly) Alas, Martha, in reality it works out that the sacrifice is usually of a somewhat more private portion of the anatomy.

MARTHA

(A snarl of dismissal and contempt) NYYYYYAAAAHHHHH!

HONEY (Rising quickly) I wonder if you could show me where the . . . (Her voice trails off)

GEORGE (To MARTHA, indicating HONEY) Martha . . .

NICK (To HONEY) Are you all right?

HONEY Of course, dear. I want to . . . put some powder on my nose.

GEORGE (As MARTHA is not getting up)

Martha, won't you show her where we keep the . . . euphemism?



So, we come to this point where it says that Martha saying that she calls it extraordinary opportunity. What is it that she calls an extraordinary opportunity? She means that married to the daughter of the president of the university. So, Martha kind of talks it talks of it as a marriage of convenience that if you are married to the daughter of the president of the university you should be able to move up the ladder, take more importance like we will see.

And George somehow has not been able to do that he says that I am in the History Department I am not the History Department. But the expectation was George would become the History Department he would become a figure of authority. But again like to become a figure of authority of patriarchal authority it is impossible for George, because George also feels that he has been emasculated in certain ways. And he constantly makes references to this process of emasculation that he feels has been emasculated in different way.

“For some men it would be chance of a lifetime! Yes. And Martha says some men would give the right arm for the chance to which George says alas Martha, in reality it works out that the sacrifice is usually of a somewhat more private portion of the anatomy.”

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NICK (To HONEY) Are you all right?
HONEY Of course, dear. I want to . . . put some powder on my nose.
GEORGE (As MARTHA is not getting up)
Martha, won't you show her where we keep the . . . euphemism?
MARTHA
Hm? What? Oh! Sure! (Rises) I'm sorry, c'mon. I want to show you the house.
HONEY I think I'd like to
MARTHA . . . wash up? Sure . . . c'mon with me. (Takes HONEY by the arm. To the men) You two do some men talk for a while.
HONEY (To NICK) We'll be back, dear.



So, we see like this will these euphemistic references to emasculation and we will see that as we spoke about language game euphemism is also very euphemism or circumlocution is a very important part of language games. Because you are saying something without saying it, it is an ideal form of language game.

Here Martha says “will not you show her where we keep the euphemism? Martha hm? Sorry George says that Martha says hm? What? Oh! Sure! I am sorry come on I want to show you the house.”

That euphemism there is this time it takes to pick up on some things and there is this some things that they pick up away, like we will play this, but this is something that took. This idea of delay instant this has something that are very important in the play; pauses, uncomfortable pauses these are very important in the play.

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You really do, George.
GEORGE O.K., Martha . . . O.K. Just ... trot along.
MARTHA
You really do.
GEORGE Just don't shoot your mouth off . . . about . . . you-know-what.
MARTHA (Surprisingly vehement) I'll talk about any goddamn thing I want to, George!
GEORGE
O.K. O.K. Vanish.
MARTHA Any goddamn thing I want to! (Practically dragging HONEY out with her) C'mon. . . .
GEORGE Vanish. (The women have gone) So? What '11 it be?
NICK Oh, I don't know . . . I'll stick to bourbon, I guess.
GEORGE (Takes NICK'S glass, goes to portable bar) That what you were drinking over at Parnassus?
NICK Over at. . . ?



George tells Martha, “Just do not shoot your mouth off about you-know-what. Constantly reminding her that this is a game that we need to play we need to start playing it, when will you play it. He tells her to talk about it by telling her to not talk about it.” We see how language games how telling not to do something is a form of asking that person to do something in a convoluted manner.

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NICK Over at. . . ?
GEORGE
Parnassus.
NICK
I don't understand. . . .
GEORGE Skip it. (Hands him his drink) One bourbon.
NICK Thanks.
GEORGE
It's just a private joke between fi'l of Martha and me. (They sit) So? (Pause) So . . . you're in the math department, eh?
NICK
No ... uh, no.
GEORGE Martha said you were. I think that's what she said. (Not too friendly) What made you decide to be a teacher?
NICK Oh . . . well, the same things that . . . uh . . . motivated you, I imagine.



And so here is the part where George and Nick are sitting together, and George again tries to pick up some camaraderie with Nick. So, that what were you drinking over at

Parnassus? So, Parnassus again the reference to Parnassus is important. Parnassus is a mountain in Greece which is supposed to be the about of Dionysus. And Dionysus is also the God of Drinking and Tragedy of in the Greek mythology. So we can see both happening here. There was drinking and the play has a tragic tone to it. So, tragedies in Ancient Greece would be performed in honor of Dionysus.

So, and again like I mentioned that the references to Ancient Greece kind of helped to stress a sort of decadence of modern day America, just the same way that Eliot would do it in *The Waste Land*. So, he is talking about certain kind of deadness of modern day America. So, that kind of it is it works as a parody.

So, the Greek banquets, those Greek drinking, those performances in honor of Dionysus, those are parodied in a sort of a deflated. Those myths are deflated of whatever sort of seriousness, this classical impetus they might have had. And Nick asks over at. So, he Nick talks at the like the place Parnassus and he cannot pick it up.

He says "Parnassus. Nick says I do not understand. George says skip it. We see that George has a sort of intellectual is he forms within a sort of intellectual discourse which is very alienating to Nick, Nick cannot do the same." He his intelligence works in a different manner and we will see that.

George cannot say anything other than just skip it, because that form of making connection with another human being is very difficult. That is what we say kind of we get this sense of isolation also very lonely very isolated people that are living here.

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I don't understand. . . .

GEORGE Skip it. (Hands him his drink) One bourbon.

NICK Thanks.

GEORGE:

It's just a private joke between li'l ol' Martha and me. (They sit) So? (Pause) So . . . you're in the math department, eh?

NICK

No . . . uh, no.

GEORGE Martha said you were. I think that's what she said. (Not too friendly) What made you decide to be a teacher?

NICK Oh . . . well, the same things that . . . uh . . . motivated you, I imagine.

GEORGE What were they?



George says “it is just a private joke between little old Martha and me”. We see they share private jokes, they have their inside jokes just like any old couple would have.

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NICK (Formal) Pardon?

GEORGE I said, what were they? What were the things that motivated me?

NICK (Laughing uneasily) Well . . . I'm sure I don't know.

GEORGE You just finished saying that the things that motivated you were the same things that motivated me.

NICK (With a little pique) I said I imagined they were. Language Games - post truth politics.

GEORGE Oh (Off-hand) Did you? (Pause) Well. . . . (Pause) You like it here?

NICK (Looking about the room) Yes . . . it's . . . it's fine.

GEORGE:

I mean the University.

nick Oh . . . I thought you meant. . . . Language games and the impossibility of direct meanings.

GEORGE Yes . . . I can see you did. (Pause) I meant the University.

NICK Well, I . . . I like it . . . fine. (As George just stares at him) Just fine. (Same) You . . . you've been here quite a long time, haven't you?



And the place this stain is also called the Carthage it has a reference to Carthage. So, Carthage also stresses that reference to old myths, where there is a destruction and Carthage was destroyed and we will see that there would be other places mentioned in a similar way creating a sense of the apocalypse. And George and Nick are saying about what motivated them to get into teaching.

And so here is at a point Nick says “I said I imagined they were. And George was just countering he said you just finished saying, that the things that motivated you were the same things that motivated me. And Nick says I said they imagined they were.” So, again you say language games coming in that, he can say “when I said that I imagined they were he did not quite actually mean exactly that they were”. He cannot be held against his word, we can slip and slide out of what we say in by playing this language games.

And language games are the like if you see post truth politics, if we see someone like Trump something the word got it was also named the word of a year by Oxford Dictionary post-truth. Post-truth was this going beyond truth in a sense of truth taking the idea of that we must be speaking the truth taking a back against this language games that one can play. “But you can say no, I did not actually mean this, I meant something else when you are being proven wrong”.

We can see in the contemporary American political landscape how such a play like this would hold great importance by how language games can help in kind of this kind of post-truth politics.

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GEORGE (Absently, as if he had not heard) What? Oh . . . yes. Ever since I married . . . uh, What's-her-name . . . uh, Martha. Even before that. (Pause) Forever. (To himself) Dashed hopes, and good intentions. Good, better, best, bested. (Back to NICK) How do you like that for a declension, young man? Eh? Language

NICK

Sir, I'm sorry if we . . .

GEORGE (With an edge in his voice) You didn't answer my question.

NICK Sir?

GEORGE (Don't you condescend to me! (Toying with him) I asked you how you liked that for a declension: Good, better, best, bested. Hm? Well?)

NICK (With some distaste) I really don't know what to say.

GEORGE (Feigned incredulosity) You really don't know what to say?

NICK (Snapping it out) All right . . . what do you want me to say? Do you want me to say it's funny, so you can contradict me and say it's sad? Or do you want me to say it's sad so you can turn around and say no, it's funny. You can play that damn little game any way you want to, you know!

GEORGE (Feigned awe) Very good! Very good!

NICK (Even angrier than before) And when my wife comes back, I think we'll just . . .



And this constantly this reference. We cannot go through each of those references here for the lack of time. So, which hints at and Nick says I thought you meant. So, there is this slipperiness that “I do not really know what this other person means what this other

person is saying”. We can relate that in your reading with language games and the impossibility of direct meanings of language as a vehicle that is incapable of conveying the exact sense that we want to convey, that the words the reference the signifiers that is the signifies sorry.

The words the signifies that we use are always taken in a corrupted manner; that the one who hears them in their mind it takes a different form than when we are talking about it.

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can contradict me and say it's sad? Or do you want me to say it's sad so you can turn around and say no, it's funny. You can play that damn little game any way you want to, you know!

GEORGE (Feigned awe) Very good! Very good!

NICK (Even angrier than before) And when my wife comes back, I think we'll just...

GEORGE (Sincere) Now, now... calm down, my boy. Just... calm... down. (Pause) All right? (Pause) You want another drink? Here, give me your glass.

NICK I still have one. I do think that when my wife comes downstairs...

GEORGE Here... I'll freshen it. Give me your glass. (Takes it)

NICK What I mean is... you two... you and your wife... seem to be having some sort of a...



And we see that this kind of language game references keep coming up that, “I asked you how you liked for that declension: good, better, best, bested.” These are declensions are old something Latin or Greek languages where the change of a verb the subject changes or other forms of the verb changes, we also have it in Sanskrit.

And Nick says “I really do not know what to say”. So, he is not quite good at playing this language games and everything. And he says that “all right, what do you want me to say? Do you want me to say it is funny, so you can contradict me and say it is sad? Or do you want me to say it is sad, so you can turn around and say no, it is funny. You can play that damn little game the way you want!”

It is always whenever it is like you try to capture one side of the things the other side becomes manifest, and when we reach out for that other side we kind of lose grasp over this side. It is almost a nonsense that we see in the Alice novels by Lewis Carroll’s and it

would be really interesting to pair that nonsense that those kind of language games that happen in Alice in Wonderland with this play where meanings are very difficult and almost paradoxical.

They are arrived at paradoxically while sense does not work, while like it moves and Deleuze has a book called the Logic of Sense where he talks about the relationship between sense and paradox that sense and lack of sense kind of move together. That when we grasp something we also grasp the other end of it which can often be sometimes very contradictory.

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GEORGE Oh, that. (Dismisses it with a wave of his hand.) That's very upsetting . . . very . . . disappointing. But history is a great deal more . . . disappointing. **I am in the History Department.**

NICK Yes . . . you told me.

GEORGE

I know I told you . . . I shall probably tell you several more times. Martha tells me often, that I am in the History Department . . . as opposed to being the History Department . . . in the sense of running the History Department. I do not run the History Department.

NICK

Well, I don't run the Biology Department.

GEORGE

You're twenty-one!



As mentioned the kind of authority, that kind of sense that he says George says “here I know I told you. I shall probably tell you several more times. Martha tells me often, that I am in the History Department, as opposed to being the History Department in the sense of running the History Department. I do not run the History Department.” He does not have a figure of authority, he does he is not an authority figure in a sense he is failed in that.

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NICK Yes ... she is.

GEORGE

(Looking at the ceiling)

What are they doing up there? I assume that's where they are.

NICK (False heartiness) You know women.

GEORGE (Gives NICK a long stare, of feigned incredulity ... then his attention moves) Not one son-of-a-bitch got killed. Of course, nobody bombed Washington. No ... that's not fair. You have any kids?

NICK Uh ... no ... not yet. (Pause) You?

GEORGE (A kind of challenge) That's for me to know and you to find out.

nick Indeed?

GEORGE No kids, hunh?

NICK Not yet.

GEORGE People do ... uh ... have kids. That's what I meant about history. You people are going to make them in test tubes, aren't you? You biologists. Babies. Then the rest of us ... them as wants to ... can screw to their heart's content. What will happen to the tax deduction? Has anyone figured that out yet?



So, at a point George Nick; “sorry Honey and Martha have left the stage and Nick and George are sitting together.” We find George and Nick sitting together often at the same time and Martha returns and says “did you two have a manly talk, did you kind of did ask Nick did you figure out George’s side of things, did he tell you his side of things”.

But we see that George can never communicate his side of things to Nick, because Nick cannot understand him. There is a huge gap, there is a huge gap of communication between Nick and George which makes it impossible.

So, but we see that at such certain banal points that they connect that Nick George says looking at the ceiling that what are they doing up there, I assume that is where they are, it is about Honey and Martha. And Nick says with false heartiness women.

So, this is typical male talk. Women, male bonding and we see that George tried to bond with Nick outside the sexist misogynist comments like women how long they take when they go to the bathroom and stuff like that. But that is not what Nick picked up on.

This is what he is picking up on, this is what makes this is what adds to the vulgarity of the play. We see later that George says tells to Nick that we find me deplorable when we are the one who is thinking of doing deplorable tasks, “you are telling me that I am the deplorable person”.

It is almost what Manto said when his short stories were criticized for being obscene, he said the society is obscene. And that society is coming back and telling me he is obscene just because he is writing about the society. It is an obscene society, it is a decadent society that Albee is writing about. And if we are writing about a society like that we must get our hands and pen dirty.

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NICK Not yet.

GEORGE People do . . . uh . . . have kids. That's what I meant about history. You people are going to make them in test tubes, aren't you? You biologists. Babies. Then the rest of us . . . them as wants to . . . can screw to their heart's content. What will happen to the tax deduction? Has anyone figured that out yet?

(NICK, who can think of nothing better to do, laughs mildly) **But you are going to have kids . . . anyway. In spite of history.**

NICK (Hedging) Yes . . . certainly. We . . . want to wait . . . a little . . . until we're settled.

GEORGE And this . . . (With a handsweep taking in not only the room, the house, but the whole countryside) . . . this is your heart's content—Illyria . . . Penguin Island . . . Gomorrah . . . You think you're going to be happy here in New Carthage, eh?

NICK (A little defensively) I hope we'll stay here.

GEORGE And every definition has its boundaries, eh? Well, it isn't a



And we have references here to having kids that Nick says that we would like to wait some time till we have kids. And we see that both the couple they do not have keep kids. If I go back with the parallel with T. S. Eliot's *Waste Land*. There is this impossibility of regeneration that is constantly highlighted in the poem.

We see there are references to taking the pill. The pill that had come up that contraceptive pill which made it possible to have sex without conceiving a child. And kind of Eliot in a manner adds it to a sort of deadness a sort of lack of regenerative possibility in the play in the in England. It has his own political views it has his own moral problems, but would just like to pick up on this thematic similarity. Not go into whether it is the right statement to make or the wrong statement to make, the right statement to make or the wrong statement to make.

This lack of children, this lack of kids and also we must signify that in the play we might think kids would it would be nice to have kids, kids would be such a relieving presence

in the play. But we see that the one child that is spoken about in the play is also one that kills his parents.

So, we see that it is also not very clear in that way that, if only they had kids it would be a solution, it would be something of a regeneration that would come in, the world would again be nice, productive; it is not quite like that. It is more problematic than that. And so but there is a sort of end of civilization that is highlighted with kids. Even if there are kids there are kids that kill their parents and later on there is a reference made that kid who kills his parents could be George himself.

George who is enabled unable to procreate to have a progeny is also someone who kills his parents. He is almost like a figure of apocalypse, there is a sort of apocalyptic quality that comes in it. I mean the World War was just ended 17 to 18 years back this is 1962 there was this huge explosion at Hiroshima Nagasaki, which created this end of world apocalyptic sense and this is the Cold War rolling in.

With the Cold War also we have another sense of apocalypse coming in that. There could be nuclear missiles coming in from Russia that might land in land that might fall in the USA and USA might shoot off other missiles into Russia. The Cold War is coming and there is this fear of nuclear war. People are building shelters to go into to hide into. And that kind of sense creates a sense of the end of world apocalyptic thing.

Where regeneration is not so much about a hopefulness about children coming in and making this world again nice. But a sort of a corruption that has seeped in which makes it difficult to see a sort of future, which makes it look like this is the end of the world. And we see that these are four people and four people and we see the apocalypse is also associated with the four horsemen of the apocalypse. We have the four horsemen who bring disease and death and war and famine in the world who harbor who bring in this apocalypse.

But again as we say this is a parody this is a sort of deflation. We do not have this grand apocalyptic figures riding on horses coming in with death we do not know. But these are kind of deflated figures and these are not all like horsemen, but there are women also importantly most importantly who can be as devastating as the men when it comes to doing damage.

And then George says again continues that sense of childlessness apocalypse with this following line that I would like you to take a notice of.


This is your heart's content Illyria; Illyria is like ancient land you can find references to it even in Shakespeare, Penguin Island it is from one of Anatole France's story and Penguin Island is destroyed. Gomorrah another biblical site that is destroyed and they live in Carthage we would have to think about it. Carthage is another place that fell that was plundered, that was destroyed by Roman soldiers. We are going to be happier in new Carthage.

This sense of Carthage; this new Carthage is also like Carthage has been destroyed, but this is the new Carthage waiting for its destruction, waiting for another kind of apocalypse to come. And maybe what we have here is kind of sort of hopelessness of a regeneration maybe what you need is this kind of new Carthage and again a kind of raising down on which new things can be built. But that is not a hint that has been produced in the story.

But that is something that we have in Eliot's *Waste Land*; in the final lines where he asks for the Ganga to flow from heavens and to make the earth fertile again. So, after a sort of destruction there is hope for regeneration only after total destruction may be there, because we are so busy with destructive impulses right now that we cannot think of regeneration.

So, maybe after total destruction there will be a possibility of regeneration; life after the apocalypse, life after the ice age has passed.

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bad college. I guess. I mean . . . it'll do. It isn't M.I.T. . . . it isn't U.C.L.A. . . . it isn't the Sorbonne . . . or Moscow U. either, for that matter.

NICK I don't mean . . . forever.


GEORGE Well, don't you let that get bandied about. The old man wouldn't like it. Martha's father expects loyalty and devotion out of his . . . staff. I was going to use another word. Martha's father expects his . . . staff . . . to cling to the walls of this place, like the ivy . . . to come here and grow old . . . to fall in the line of service. One man, a professor of Latin and Elocution, actually fell in the cafeteria line, one lunch. He was buried, as many of us have been, and as many more of us will be, under the shrubbery around the chapel. It is said . . . and I have no reason to doubt it . . . that we make excellent fertilizer. But the old man is not going to be buried under the shrubbery . . . the old man is not going to die. Martha's father has the staying power of one of those Micronesian tortoises. There are rumors . . . which you must not breathe in front of Martha, for she foams at the mouth . . . that the old man, her father, is over two hundred years old. There is probably an irony involved in this, but I am not drunk enough to figure out what it is. How many kids you going to have?

NICK I . . . I don't know . . . My wife is . . .

GEORGE Slim-hipped. (Rises) Have a drink.

NICK Yes.

GEORGE Martha! (No answer) damn rr! (To NICK) You asked me if I knew women . . . Well, one of die
Kissed I do not know about them is what they talk about while the man are talking. (Usually) I must find out



Again this part also carries on this sort of deadness that the old man would not like it George says Martha's father expects loyalty and devotion out of his staff. Staff is also like it has a very phallic connotation with it. Staff is also something the king holds when he rules.

We see that contrast the figure of Martha's father with the figure of George, while Martha's father is a successful patriarch a successful figure of authority. George is emasculated while Martha's daddy is has strong hold on his staff and Martha's father expects his staff to cling to the walls of this place like the ivy to come here and grow old. There is this reference to a professor of Latin and elocution who actually fell in the cafeteria line, one lunch.

There is just death and we see that Latin and is a dead language. We have this sort of deathness with language and deathness of people coming together.

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NICK Yes.

GEORGE Martha! (No answer) damn rrr! (To NICK) You asked me if I knew women . . . Well, one of die things I do not know about them is what they talk about while the men are talking. (Vaguely) I must find out some time.

MARTHA'S VOICE WHADDYA WANT?

GEORGE Isn't that a wonderful sound? What I mean is . . . what do you think they really talk about... or don't you care?

NICK

Themselves, I would imagine.

MARTHA'S VOICE GEORGE?

GEORGE (To NICK) Do you find women . . . puzzling?

NICK

Well ... yes and no.

GEORGE (With a knowing nod) Unh-hunh. (Moves toward the hall, almost bumps into HONEY, reentering) Oh! Well, here's one of you, at least.



We make excellent fertilizer. This is what was hinting about when he was saying that the possibility of regeneration after apocalypse after death. Maybe on the dead bodies new things will grow, that is the kind of vision that we have. But it is impossible for anything to grow in this era of deadness.

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HONEY (Reassuring, but with the echo of a whine. A long-practiced tone) Oh, yes, dear . . . perfectly fine.

GEORGE (Fuming . . . to himself) So she wants to be comfortable, does she? Well, we'll see about that.

HONEY (To GEORGE, brightly) I didn't know until just a minute ago that you had a son.

GEORGE (Wheeling, as if struck from behind) WHAT?

HONEY

A son! I hadn't known.

NICK

You to know and me to find out. Well, he must be quite a big, . . .

HONEY Twenty-one . . . twenty-one tomorrow . . . tomorrow's his birthday.

NICK (A victorious smile) Well!

GEORGE (To HONEY) She told you about him?

HONEY (Flustered) Well, yes. Well, I mean. . . .

GEORGE (Nailing it down) She told you about him.


HONEY (A nervous glance) Yes



This is the part where Honey and Martha have come back and Honey says to George “I did not know just until just a minute ago that you had a son. George says wheeling as if struck from behind. What?” We get the sense like that he was kind of expecting it

because he is the one who put the idea in Martha's head, but you can see that they are acting they are also acting on the stage. The fact that they are acting it is made so explicit that they are on a stage that makes this confusion of illusion and reality more interesting. He is dumbfounded he is stuck like what it has been brought up. But it is almost like he is the one who planted the idea in her head.

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NICK (Softly, to HONEY)
We'll go in a little while.


GEORGE (Driving) Oh no, now ... you mustn't. Martha is changing ... and Martha is not changing for me. Martha hasn't changed for me in years. If Martha is changing, it means we'll be here for ... days. You are being accorded an honor, and you must not forget that Martha is the daughter of our beloved boss. She is his ... right ball, you might say.

NICK You might not understand this ... but I wish you wouldn't talk that way in front of my wife.

HONEY
Oh, now ...

GEORGE (Incredulous) Really? Well, you're quite right. ... We'll leave that sort of talk to Martha.

MARTHA (Entering) What sort of talk?



Here is the reference that Martha is changing. Martha has not yet come back into the scene she is changing she is going to come back into a as a changed person. If not a changed person as in changed clothes and he says that Martha is not changing for me.

Martha and George cannot probably change any further they are too set in their ways they are old. One of the parts of being old is that they are too set in their ways they cannot change anymore, there is no possibility of changing. We are being accorded an honor and must not forget that Martha is the daughter of our beloved boss. She is his right ball.

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MARTHA George is not preoccupied with history... George is preoccupied with the History Department. George is preoccupied with the History Department because...

GEORGE... because he is not the History Department, but is only in the History Department. We know, Martha... we went all through it while you were upstairs... getting up. There's no need to go through it again.

MARTHA That's right, baby... keep it clean. (To the others) George is bogged down in the History Department. He's an old bog in the History Department, that's what George is. A bog... A fen... A G.D. swamp. Ha, ha, ha ha! A swamp! Hey, swamp! Hey, swampy!


GEORGE (With a great effort controls himself... then, as if she had said nothing more than "George, dear")

Yes, Martha? Can I get you something?

MARTHA (Amused at his game) Well... uh... sure, you can light my cigarette, if you're of a mind to.

GEORGE (Considers, then moves off) No... there are limits. I mean, man can put up with only so much without he descends a rung or two on the old evolutionary ladder... (Now a quick aside to NICK)... which is up your line... (Then back to MARTHA)... sinks, Martha, and it's a funny ladder... you can't reverse yourself... start back up once you're descending.

(MARTHA blows him an ardent kiss) Now... I'll hold your hand when it's dark and you're afraid of the



Again like here we have this references that George is emasculated that he has not done good enough with his work. "George is a bog, a fen a, GD Swamp, ha ha! Swamp! Hey, swamp! Hey swampy!" So he is been called these things, he is been constantly cajoled into sort of like in cajoled in pejorative terms he is being he is been called bad things in pejorative terms.

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bogey man, and I'll tote your gin bottles out after midnight, so no one'll see... but I will not light your cigarette. And that, as they say, is that. (Brief silence)

MARTHA (Under her breath) Jesus! (Then, immediately, to NICK) Hey, you played football, huhh?

Dear.

HONEY (As NICK seems sunk in thought)

NICK Oh! Oh, yes... I was a... quarterback... but I was much more... adept... at boxing, really.

MARTHA (With great enthusiasm) BOXING! You hear that, George?


GEORGE (Resignedly) Yes, Martha.

MARTHA (To NICK, with peculiar intensity and enthusiasm)

You musta been pretty good at it... I mean, you don't look like you got hit in the face at all.

HONEY (Proudly) He was intercollegiate state middleweight champion.

NICK (Embarrassed) Honey...



We have decided that George says that Martha asks him will he light her cigarette for him George says no there are limits. Man can put up with only so much without he

descends a rung or two on the evolutionary ladder. We can see that there is this talk of evolution this talk of progress we think of the evolution as a form of progress, but he is talking about going down a rung or two on the evolutionary ladder becoming less than who is.

As if he has come to a point. He is becoming less than human and pointed out that this idea of dehumanization in the play, that the people have become less than human in a sense that the high dignity to which human beings should hold themselves that is falling down.

He is saying "I feel like I am falling down the evolutionary ladder, I am becoming less than human if this is". We see that this progress is also being criticized in Albee that this progress has not been a very clean progress, it is not something that is very clean that takes comes to a very fruition to a very fruitful culmination it is a very fruitful process. Even evolution has not been a very kind process. We have had wars, we have gone that it is like continuously being haunted by wars.